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# ENG 3701-001: Nineteenth Century American Literature 1800-1850

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English 3701--001: Nineteenth Century American Literature: 1800-1850 (Writing-Intensive)

Purpose: This course focuses on American works produced from about 1800-1860. The period includes what F.O. Matthiessen called the "'American Renaissance,'" a time of extraordinary literary expression from the likes of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Frederick Douglass, Henry David Thoreau, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman. Because the period had a long foregrounding in the earlier writings of the age, we will also examine the literature that preceded the 1800s. Such a procedure will allow us to see the larger context in which the major figures responded so powerfully to a call for a distinctive American literature. Among the themes we will touch on during the semester are the significance of "NATURE," the centrality of the individual, the importance of creative imagination, the image and function of the noble savage, the uses of gothic artifice, the promises and dangers of American democracy, and the intellectual and cultural undercurrents that began to erode Romantic idealism. We will study the literature not only to increase our appreciation for its aesthetic merits but also to consider its abiding relevance.

Scope: During the semester you will read a wide range of essays, stories, novels ("romances"), works of personal record, and poems. Your performance will be evaluated by means of class participation, a final examination, a series of written responses, and a critical essay. You can earn credit for participation by responding to questions, asking questions, and volunteering comments. The final will include two parts. Part I will require you to write two paragraph-length responses (about 300-400 words each) based on two of three items; Part II will require you to write an essay (about 600-800 words) based on one of three items. During the semester, you will submit five typed written responses (approximately 400-500 words each) addressing topics and questions that I will pose in class, usually at the end of class. These responses must be supported by evidence and reasoning. In addition, you will prepare a typewritten critical essay of 8-10 pages of argument. In your critical essay, which you must hand in at the classroom on the last day of class, you will provide an extended answer to a critical question about a range of poems, a range of stories, and/or a major work. I will hand out "Guidelines" to provide additional information about the critical essay.

Components of the Grade

- Participation (10%)
- Final (15%)
- Five Written (typed) Responses of approximately 400-500 words each (30%)
- Critical Essay of 8-10 Pages of Argument (45%)

Grading: When I evaluate written work for your final examination and critical essay, I consider content, coherence, grammar, and mechanics. By content I mean a relationship between purpose, reasoning, and evidence. By coherence I mean orderly unfolding of ideas and evidence in your argument, as well as smooth transitions and accurate language. By grammar I mean the use of standard English grammar in the construction of sentences. And by mechanics I mean standard punctuation and MLA documentation. Of course, content is most important, but a written performance, especially the critical essay, can receive a low grade, even a failing grade, if it is radically incoherent or riddled with errors of grammar and/or mechanics.

Missed Work: If you miss a response, you will not be permitted to submit it later. However, if you have an excused absence, I will not count the response in your average. Should you miss the final examination, you may take a make-up examination only if you have an excused absence. An excused absence requires a confirmation from the Health Service, a university official, or a doctor. I expect you to turn in your critical essay on time. If you fail to do so, your essay will pay a five-point penalty for each of the first two days of lateness. After two days, I will not accept the essay.

Attendance Policy: Class attendance is important. During class, I will often provide information about literary history, theory, and criticism – information that you should learn in a course about in a literary-historical survey. Moreover, your participation in discussion and questioning, even as a listener, is an important learning experience. And, of course, your participation contributes to the learning of other students. For these reasons and others, your grade will be deducted 10% after three unexcused absences and 5% for each unexcused absence thereafter. The same penalties will apply to arriving at class late, leaving class early, and leaving and returning during class, unless you obtain my approval.

Students With Disabilities: If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Electronic Writing Portfolio: You may submit a written response or the critical essay for the EWP. EWP submissions must include at least 750 words.

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

### THE PIONEERS

1. Week of January 7
  - Introduction to Course
  - Crevecoeur, from *Letters from an American Farmer* (605-25); Handout of "Poem on the Industry of the United States"
2. Week of January 14
  - Humphreys, "Poem on the Industry of the United States"; Freneau (756-57), "The Wild Honey Suckle" (757-58); "The Indian Burying Ground" (758-59), "To Sir Toby" (759-60), "On the Religion of Nature" (762); Bleeker, "On the Immensity of Creation" (733-35); Faugeres, "To Aribert, October, 1790" (736-37); Wheatley (762-64), "To S. M., a Young African American Painter, on Seeing His Works" (771-72)
  - Irving (25-27), "The Author's Account of Himself" (27-29), "Rip Van Winkle" (29-41), "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (41-62)
3. Week of January 21
  - Cooper (62-64), from "The Leather-Stocking Tales" (64-86); Bryant (121-23), "Thanatopsis" (123-24), "The Prairies" (126-29)

### THE TRANSCENDENTALISTS AND REFORMERS

- Emerson (211-14), from *Nature* (214-17, 222-27), "The American Scholar" (243-56)
4. Week of January 28
    - "Self-Reliance" (269-86) "The Rhodora" (1032), "Each and All" (1046-47), "The Snow-Storm" (1052-53), "Hamatreya" (1050-51); Handout of "Uriel"
    - "The Poet" (295-310); "The Snow Storm" (242), "Merlin" (244-47), and "Uriel"
  5. Week of February 4
    - Thoreau (961-64), "Resistance to Civil Government" (964-79); from *Walden* (981-1007)
    - from *Walden* (1023-33, 1061-82, 1085-1104)
  6. Week of February 11
    - Douglass (1170-74), *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (1174-1208)
    - Narrative* (1208-1239); Fuller (740-43), "The Great Lawsuit: Man versus Men. Woman versus Women" (743-53)

### THE ROMANCERS

7. Week of February 18
  - Hawthorne (369-73), "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" (373-86), "Young Goodman

Brown" (386-95), "The May-Pole of Merry Mount" (401-409)  
--"The Minister's Black Veil" (409—18), "The Birth-Mark" (418-29),

8. Week of February 25

--Poe (629-33), "Ligeia" (644-53), "The Fall of the House of Usher" (654-667), "The Masque of the Red Death" (687-91)  
-- "The Tell-Tale Heart" (691-695), "The Purloined Letter" (701-14), "The Cask of Amontillado" (714-19)

9. Week of March 4

--Poe, "Sonnet—To Science" (633), "To Helen" (633-34)  
"Israfel" (634-35), "The City in the Sea" (635-36), "Ulalume--A Ballad" (640-43)  
--"The Raven" (637-40), "The Philosophy of Composition" (719-27), "Annabel Lee" (643-44); **Proposals Due**

**SPRING BREAK**

10. Week of March 18

--Hawthorne, from "The Custom House" (450-57, 465-71), *The Scarlet Letter* (476-509)  
--*The Scarlet Letter* (509-550)

11. Week of March 25

--*The Scarlet Letter* (550-94)  
--Melville, *Moby-Dick* (18-79)

12. Week of April 1

--*Moby-Dick* (79-97, 101-14, 125-31, 136-70, 177-88)  
--*Moby-Dick* (190-214, 223-57, 290-93, 296-305)

13. Week of April 8

--*Moby-Dick* (324-29, 331-35, 354-68, 379-84, 386-88, 392-95, 404-27)  
--"Bartleby, the Scrivener" (1483-95)

14. Week of April 15

--"Bartleby, the Scrivener" (1496-1509); "Benito Cereno" (1526-1550)  
--"Benito Cereno" (1551-1582)

**THE NATIONAL BARD**

15. Week of April 22

--Whitman (1310-14), from "Song of Myself" (1330-49, 1369-74), "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" (1387-92)  
"The Wound-Dresser" (1399-1401); **Critical Essay Due in Class (two copies);**  
Orientation for Final Examination